


Ewa Komorowska 

University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland

e.komorowsk2@uw.edu.pl

Multilingual Expatriates in Poland and Their Attitudes Towards Learning Polish

Abstract

The article presents partial results from an online survey conducted with a group of expatriates living and working in Poland. The main aim of the study was to examine the attitude of the target group towards learning Polish, and to find the most important motivations for learning it or the reasons for not doing so. This problem has not been thoroughly researched before because expatriates previously were not treated as a separate research group. The results show, however, that they are an interesting object of study; they differ from other types of learners (e.g. academic learners) mostly because of their different motivations and attitudes towards learning Polish. The language profile of the expatriates is particularly noteworthy, especially their multilingualism, although not all are learning Polish. Their motivations to start learning the language, and the reasons for stopping to do so or for not even starting at all despite living in Poland for long time, are also worth exploring.

Keywords: multilingualism with Polish; expats in Poland; attitudes towards Polish

1 Background

Over the recent past, and especially since joining the European Union in 2004, Poland has become a more attractive country for international investors. Although foreign companies are coming and opening new offices in Poland, part of their staff is typically transferred from the companies' home countries. Foreign corporations operating in Poland want to have personnel who know the company from inside, its goals and its work culture. The last point, especially, is crucial for reaching a mutual understanding between Polish employees and their foreign employer. The need to know Polish language and culture, as well as its work culture, is one of the reasons why international expatriates coming to Poland often decide to learn the language of the country they have come to work in, even when they are not obliged to.

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, an “expatriate” (or an “expat”) is “someone who does not live in their own country” (“Expatriate”, n.d.). This very simple definition is, however, not very different from the definition of the word “immigrant”, described as “a person who has come to a country that is not their own in order to live there permanently” (“Immigrant”, n.d.). How is it possible to distinguish between these two types of migrants? Two differences worth noticing relate to work and temporality; an expatriate typically comes to another country due to work reasons and his or her stay is most often temporary. Importantly, an expatriate is usually a professional or skilled worker in his field who is offered a suitable position before moving to another country (Kagan, 2021).

There is no official data on how many expatriates live in Poland, as they are not considered a separate group in the migration statistics. The only data available provides information about immigrants in general; at the end of 2019, there were 2,106,101 foreigners registered in Poland, among which the biggest group were Ukrainians, followed by Belarusians (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2020). Of these two groups, the majority would not be considered expats, as they usually come to Poland with the intention of settling permanently (Levchuk, 2019), they usually search for a job after arriving in Poland and often, especially at the beginning, work in more poorly-paid positions/professions, sometimes below their qualifications.

Moreover, there has been no academic research conducted on expatriates in Poland until now. Studies performed so far mostly focused on major immigrant groups such as Ukrainians (i.e. Levchuk, 2019, 2021), or on migrant children in the Polish education system (i.e. Debski et al., 2020; Mikulska, 2021).

Additionally, Pawłowski pointed out that “there are no or few verified representative data on the linguistic attitudes and behaviours of the migrants from the East” (Pawłowski, 2019, p. 174), which seems to be the accurate not only of the research conducted on Eastern European migrants in Poland, but also on all of the other groups of foreigners living in the country, especially those less represented in society. Among the rare examples of research conducted in this area is Levchuk’s study from 2019, in which he examined the attitudes of Ukrainian students living in Poland, of whom over half expressed both a positive attitude towards the Polish language and a willingness to learn it (Levchuk, 2019, p. 9).

2 Learners with Specific Needs and Motivation

Expatriates are not typical language learners as their needs are usually complex: both professional (related to working in a foreign country) and personal (connected with living abroad). This specific work-life situation locates the expatriate somewhere between the business learner and a general language learner. Therefore, the crucial part of planning a language course for expatriates requires a thorough analysis. As Evan Frendo said: “A needs analysis helps the teacher to understand the difference between where the learners are, in terms of communicative competence, and where they need to be to meet their business aims” (Frendo, 2005, p. 15).

A needs analysis would also help the teacher to know the learner’s motivation to undertake a course. There are many classifications of motivation, although the most common is to present dichotomous pairs (Komorowska, 2005; Ligara & Szupelak, 2012; Szalek, 2004):

- *intrinsic* vs. *extrinsic*,
- *integrative* vs. *instrumental*.

In the pair *intrinsic* vs. *extrinsic* motivation, the first is often considered more valuable or noble (Ligara & Szupelak, 2012, p. 106), because “intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and because they lead to an extrinsic reward. Intrinsically motivated behaviours are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-determination” (Deci, 1975, p. 23). On the contrary, extrinsic motivation comes from outside the learner, and sometimes also from outside the teacher, such as the status of the language in society (or in a school context – among other subjects taught at school) or the possibilities of using the language in practice (Szalek, 2004, p. 60). Externally-motivated language learning leads to separate consequences (other than just language knowledge), does not usually occur spontaneously, and might be prompted by external incentives or pressures (Brophy, 2010, p. 154).

To some extent, instrumental motivation is analogous to extrinsic motivation, as the motive here usually also comes from the outside the learner. The language here is a tool used in order to achieve a goal, such as passing an examination, opening up new professional possibilities, or studying in a foreign country (Daskalovska et al., 2012, p. 2; Szalek, 2004, p. 59). On the contrary,

integrative motivation is a desire to be a part of the target-language community and to integrate culturally and linguistically in society (Daskalovska et al., 2012, p. 2; Szalek, 2004, p. 59).

In addition to the four most common types of motivation, it is possible to find various other specifications. In relation to a scale, motivation may be divided into *global* (which would refer to learners' general goals), *situational* (which depends on the learning situation) or *task motivation* (in which the learning process is devoted to a particular task) (Daskalovska et al., 2012, pp. 3–4).

Another important issue related to motivation is the *attitude towards language*, which relates to the learner's perception of language complexity or difficulty, its usefulness and role in the world, and even its beauty (Komorowska, 2005, p. 129). When the *attitude towards society and culture* of the target language is positive, it might increase the learner's integrative motivation and create a strong need to fully immerse him/herself in the language and culture (Komorowska, 2005, p. 129).

3 Research Methodology

The research results presented are a part of a larger study focused on teaching Polish as a foreign language in a business context at the lowest levels, whose objective was to highlight the complexity of the didactic process, with special attention given to learners' and teachers' perspectives. However, this article will only focus on the point of view of the first group, as the goal of this contribution is to show learners' language background and their attitudes towards learning Polish.

To analyse the results more thoroughly, data triangulation was applied (Long, 2005; Patton, 1999) by using both qualitative (i.e. case studies, participant observation) and quantitative methods (i.e. online surveys). In the whole study, the data was collected from both teachers and learners of Polish as a foreign language, though in this article only the learner's perspective and the results of the online survey will be presented.

The survey was entitled *Professionals working in Poland and their attitude towards learning Polish language* and was conducted online in summer 2017, between 2 July and 30 August. During this period, 186 respondents answered the questionnaire. The target group was expatriates living and working in Poland, and knowledge of Polish language was not obligatory. Because of this, the study was conducted in English, which enabled foreigners with different levels of Polish language skills to participate, including those who did not speak Polish at all. The survey was conducted using Google Forms and was distributed online only, mostly via Facebook, and especially among English-speaking groups for international expatriates living in Poland. Participation in the study was voluntary and answers were given anonymously.

The questions were divided into four blocks. At the end of the second part, respondents were directed to four subgroups, depending on the answer to the question about learning (or not learning) Polish. Because of this division, the third block had a different construction for each subgroup (see Figure 1 for details). The last summarizing block was identical for everyone. At the end of each block respondents had the possibility of leaving a comment.

In the first part of the survey, all participants were asked general questions about their age, sex, country of origin, and the place in Poland where they lived, as well as their professional area and current position in their company. In this block of questions, respondents were also questioned about the length of their stay in Poland and the reason why they chose to move there. In the next section, all of the questions were related to languages: the native language of participants and other languages that they knew, with self-evaluation of their level on the scale of basic/intermediate/advanced. The following question, *Are you learning Polish?*, had four possible answers:

- *Yes, I am.*
- *No, and I've never learned.*
- *No, but I used to learn.*
- *Not at the moment, but I am planning to start.*

Although the three negative answers might be surprising, the aim here was to understand the different perspectives of professionals living in Poland. The focus was on those people who had given up studying Polish after some attempts, as well as those who had never started learning it, despite living and working in Poland.

As mentioned above, depending on the answer to the question regarding learning Polish, the participants were directed to different versions of the third part of the questionnaire. The differences between the possible variants of the third unit are presented below (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. The construction of the third part of the survey (own study).

After completing the third part, the participants were directed to the last section, which was the same for all respondents. In this unit, they did not respond to any closed questions, but they had the possibility to share their reflections about learning Polish through an open question: *Is there anything related to learning Polish language that you'd like to share?* Many of the participants used this opportunity to express their personal experiences of learning Polish.

4 Basic Information About the Participants

Expatriates living in Poland are not typical learners of Polish language because of their specific needs related to living and working in a foreign country. This uniqueness is also visible in the basic information about the survey participants. Since there is no statistical data about expatriates in Poland, we can only compare them to general data about immigrants (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2020):

Table 1. The ten biggest minorities in Poland at the end of 2019 (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2020).

Country of origin	Number of residents	Percent of the whole group
Ukraine	1 351 418	64.17%
Belarus	105 404	5.00%
Germany	77 073	3.66%
Moldova	37 338	1.77%
Russia	37 030	1.76%
India	33 107	1.57%
Georgia	27 917	1.33%
Vietnam	27 386	1.30%
Turkey	25 049	1.19%
China	23 838	1.13%
Other	360 541	17.12%
Total:	2 106 101	100.00%

As presented in Table 1, the most represented migrant group in Poland are Ukrainians, followed by Belarusians and Germans. As shown below, the national origins of the participants of the study was very different (Table 2).

In the online survey, the largest group were Americans (16.3%), followed by British (12.37%) and Spanish (6.45%). It is worth noticing that neither Ukrainians, being the biggest minority in Poland, or any of the ten biggest foreign groups in Poland (see Table 1), were strongly represented in the study (Ukrainians – 1.61%, Belarusians – 1.08%). This might be a consequence of many factors; firstly, the way the questionnaire was distributed: online only and via English-speaking Facebook groups, which are visited mostly by expats from the USA or the United Kingdom; secondly, the definition of the target group as expatriates living in Poland (who usually come from the USA or western Europe), and the name of survey itself (*Professionals working in Poland and their attitude towards learning Polish language*); and thirdly, the fact that the study was conducted in English, which could have made it less accessible for other Slavic nations.

Another interesting outcome from the survey is related to the languages spoken by the participants. The unit of the questionnaire devoted to languages inquired about the respondents' native languages, as well as other foreign languages that they knew. In this second case, the participants

Table 2. Declared origin of study participants (own study).

Country of origin	Number of survey participants	%	Country of origin	Number of survey participants	%
USA	30	16.13%	Ireland	2	1.08%
United Kingdom	23	12.37%	Lithuania	2	1.08%
Spain	12	6.45%	Moldova	2	1.08%
Brazil	8	4.30%	Switzerland	2	1.08%
Portugal	8	4.30%	Argentina	1	0.54%
India	7	3.76%	Austria	1	0.54%
Romania	7	3.76%	Bulgaria	1	0.54%
Finland	6	3.23%	Estonia	1	0.54%
France	6	3.23%	Georgia	1	0.54%
Denmark	5	2.69%	Indonesia	1	0.54%
Chile	5	2.69%	Iran	1	0.54%
Hungary	4	2.15%	Latvia	1	0.54%
Australia	4	2.15%	Malaysia	1	0.54%
Germany	4	2.15%	Mexico	1	0.54%
Canada	3	1.61%	Nepal	1	0.54%
Czech Republic	3	1.61%	Peru	1	0.54%
Greece	3	1.61%	Philippines	1	0.54%
Italy	3	1.61%	South Africa	1	0.54%
The Netherlands	3	1.61%	Suriname	1	0.54%
Russia	3	1.61%	Taiwan	1	0.54%
Sweden	3	1.61%	Tunisia	1	0.54%
Turkey	3	1.61%	Venezuela	1	0.54%
Ukraine	3	1.61%	Vietnam	1	0.54%
Belarus	2	1.08%	Zimbabwe	1	0.54%
			Total	186	100.00%

also self-evaluated their level on a three-point scale: *basic* – *intermediate* – *advanced*. Their Polish language skills were not evaluated in this question.

Answers to the question relating to the native language of the participants mostly matched the declared country of origin. Curiously, as a native language English was chosen 67 times (36%), which made it more popular than declaring an English-speaking country of origin. While this choice is understandable in case of participants from India or Zimbabwe, where English is one of the official languages, it was surprising in some declarations, such as a German teacher who indicated two native languages: German and English, or a French financial analyst, who declared native English and advanced French. However, the survey data is insufficient to understand the choices of these people, as they did not provide enough information in their language biographies.

The second most popular native language was Spanish with 22 declarations (12%), followed by Portuguese (15 responders, 8%), Romanian (8 answers, 4%), German (7 people, 3.7%), French and Russian (each with 6 declarations, 3.2%). Other participants were native speakers of other European languages, such as Danish, Finnish, Swedish or Hungarian, but some Asian languages were also declared, e.g. Hindi or Chinese. Native speakers of Slavic languages were not widely

represented, with a total of 12 declarations: 6 speakers of Russian, 3 – Czech, 2 – Ukrainian and one Bulgarian.

In the context of the language learning process, the most interesting data came from the question about the foreign languages already known by the participants. Obviously, all the respondents knew English, as it was the language in which the survey was conducted. Moreover, the majority declared an advanced level of this language, which is also not surprising as the expatriates sent to Poland are usually obliged by their employers to speak English to a very high level.

The second most declared foreign language was French, which was chosen 80 times in total, while the third most known language was Spanish (66 declarations), followed by German, which was selected 53 times. All of the declarations – including the level of self-evaluation – are shown in the table below sorted by popularity (from most to least popular):

Table 3. Knowledge of foreign languages declared by survey participants (own study).

	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Total
English		1	118	119
French	43	19	18	80
Spanish	40	8	18	66
German	33	13	7	53
Italian	20	10	2	32
Russian	13	4	7	24
Portuguese	13	8	2	23
Swedish	9	5	3	17
Other non-Slavic	4	3	7	14
Other Slavic	5	2	6	13
Dutch	6	3	2	11
Japanese	9		1	10
Chinese	3		3	6
Norwegian	5	2		7
Romanian	3		3	6
Ukrainian	1		3	4
Latvian	4			4
Hebrew	4			4
Arabic	2		1	3
Bulgarian	2	1		3
Finnish	2		1	3
Lithuanian	2		1	3
Czech	2			2
Hungarian	2			2
Greek	1			1

As mentioned before, the most popular foreign language among the survey participants was English, followed by different Romance languages (especially French and Spanish, but also Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian), and other Germanic languages, in particular German. Like in other parts of the questionnaire, it is not possible in this unit to observe any significant popularity among

the Slavic languages, of which the most frequently declared was Russian (24 people in total). 13 people indicated knowledge of another Slavic language; unfortunately, they did not indicate in the comments which language it was, and which could not have been any of the four Slavic languages mentioned in the survey: i.e., Bulgarian, Czech, Russian or Ukrainian.

Among all of the participants of the survey, there were only 12 people who did not declare knowledge of any foreign languages. All of these respondents were native speakers of English.

It is worth mentioning that the average number of languages known was calculated at (precisely) 2.74 languages per person, with 510 declarations for 186 study participants. This was without taking into consideration any possible knowledge of Polish. This number is even more significant if we exclude participants that did not declare any foreign language (12), which would mean 510 declarations for 174 participants, an average of 2.93 languages per person.

5 Results

The section of the questionnaire relating to language knowledge ended with a question pertaining to Polish. As previously mentioned, participants were asked *Are you learning Polish?* and the possible answers were:

- Yes, I am.
- No, and I’ve never learned.
- No, but I used to learn.
- Not at the moment, but I am planning to start.

The answers are shown in the diagram below:

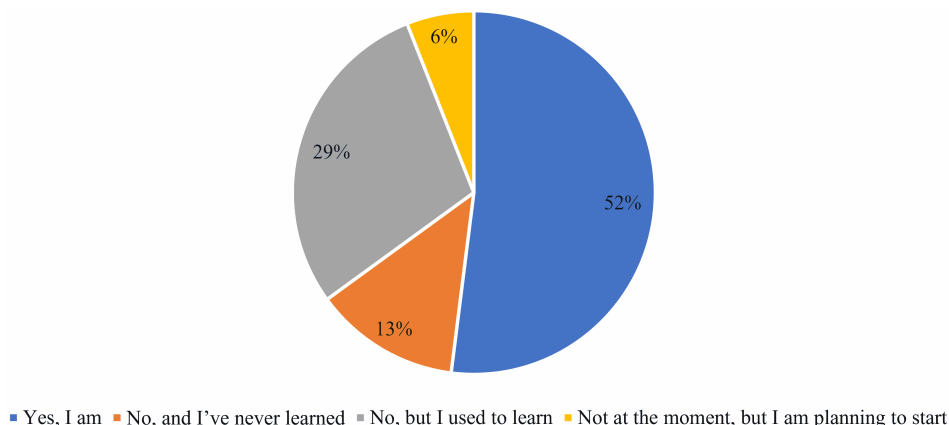


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents learning /not learning Polish (own study).

Of all the participants of the survey, the majority consisted of people with a positive attitude towards learning Polish. More than half (96–52%) were in the process of learning Polish at the time of the survey. 53 respondents (29%) had learnt Polish before and 12 (6%) were planning to start. Only 25 participants (13%) declared that they had never learnt Polish and were not planning to start.

The participants from the first three sub-groups were asked to indicate how they had learnt Polish (this was a multiple-choice question, so respondents could select more than one option), see Fig. 3.

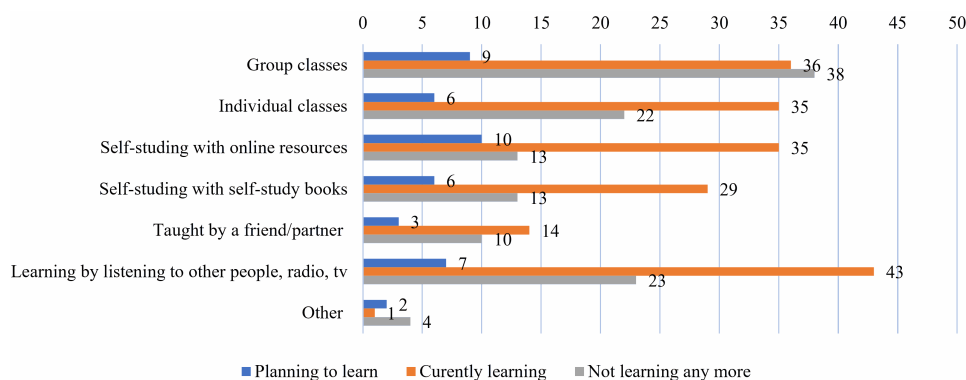


Figure 3. Declared method of learning Polish (own study).

Among all of the survey participants, the most common method of learning Polish was group classes, chosen by 83 people in total (52%), while learning through individual classes was declared by 63 participants (39%). Of the participants currently learning Polish, the most popular method was learning through everyday contact with the Polish language, such as listening to other people, radio or television, which was chosen 43 times in this subgroup (45%) and 73 times in total (39%). Self-study with online resources was also popular, selected by 58 respondents (31%), as was studying with self-study books, which was declared 48 times (26%). Among the available options, the least popular was the answer *I was taught by my friend or partner*, chosen by 27 participants (15%). 7 people selected the answer *Other* and in the comments they added: learning in a language tandem, talking with family or friends on a daily basis, completing crosswords in Polish or socialising with Polish people. One respondent wanted to learn Polish with his daughter, as she would be immersed in Polish as her first language.

The questions *Why do you learn Polish?* or *Why do you want to learn Polish?* were asked to two subgroups: those currently learning it and those planning to learn it.

In total, 117 respondents provided 458 answers to those questions, with an average of 3.91 reasons per person.

The answers in both subgroups are shown in the diagram below:



Figure 4. The motivation to learn Polish among survey participants (own study).

As presented in Figure 4, the most popular answer was *I live in Poland and I think learning the language helps in getting to know the country better*, which was chosen by 81 (84%) participants currently learning and 16 (76%) of those planning to learn. Some of them decided to extend their answers in the comments,¹ e.g.:

- *I feel responsible to learn the language and participate in the culture. I am fortunate that I am an English Native Speaker in Warsaw, but after living in Poland for so many years, I realize that language is the barrier keeping any person from truly integrating and making connections (...);*
- *Today without Polish knowledge it will be difficult for a foreigner to be integrating properly in Poland;*
- *If you live in a country without learning the language, you will only hear and see a small part of the country, and you are not showing respect to your hosts. Polish people have been very welcoming, kind, and respectful to us so far, and I think it's respectful to try to learn their language.*

The second most popular option chosen in this question was *I want to use Polish in everyday situations*, selected by 72 people currently learning Polish (75%) and 15 who were planning to study it (71%). The next most chosen answers were: *I want to use Polish with my friends* (60 participants, 51%) and *I want to use Polish with my colleagues* (52 participants, 44%).

There was a significant group of participants that simply enjoys learning languages (52 participants, 44%). This is certainly an example of intrinsic motivation, which is often considered to be one of the best types of motivation. Some of the respondents shared their positive feelings towards the Polish language in the comments, e.g.: *I love Polish language* or *We are beginners but it's enjoyable and a really lovely language*. Slightly less popular were answers related to family: *I want to use Polish with my partner* (38 responses, 32%) and *I want to use Polish with the family of my partner* (48 responses, 41%). The option most rarely declared by participants was *I want to use Polish with my clients*, which was chosen by only 17 respondents.

The results mentioned above present the relevant motivation of two subgroups: respondents learning Polish and those planning to learn. In addition, there were two other subgroups participating in the study: respondents who have learnt Polish in the past but decided to stop, and those who have never learnt the language. There were 53 people in the group that had previously learnt Polish but had stopped (28,5% of all the participants), while the non-learner group consisted of 25 respondents (13,4%). Both subgroups will be presented separately, as they represent two different problems: loss of motivation and lack of motivation.

At the beginning of the third part of the questionnaire, those who had decided to stop learning were asked to self-evaluate their competency in Polish. The aim of this question was to ascertain how many of the respondents had stopped learning because they had reached an advanced level. Although the majority of the respondents (exactly 58%) knew Polish at a basic level, 28% declared an intermediate level and only 13% self-evaluated their level of Polish as advanced. Only 9 people, 17% of the subgroup, had decided to stop learning Polish because they had reached a satisfactory level in the language. Moreover, among those 9 participants, 6 evaluated their level of Polish as advanced, 2 considered their level to be intermediate, and one declared a basic level of Polish.

In the following part, respondents answered the multiple-choice question: *Why are you not learning anymore?* Participants could give more than one answer, as there are sometimes more than one reason to stop attending a language course. Possible answers and the respondents' choices are shown in the diagram below (Figure 5).

As shown in Figure 5, the most common reason for giving up learning Polish was *I don't have time any more*, declared by 27 people, 51% of the subgroup. The second most popular declaration

¹ At the end of each module of the survey, participants had an opportunity to leave a comment related to the questions they were answering. Some of the comments are quoted here and in the following parts of the article in their original form.

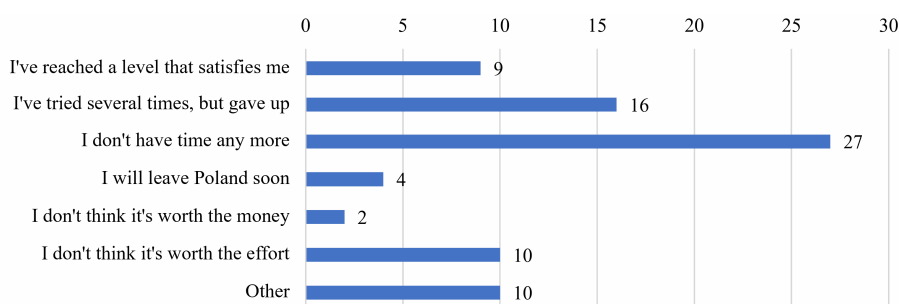


Figure 5. Motives for stopping learning Polish (own study).

was *I've tried several times, but gave up*, chosen by 16 participants, 30% of the subgroup. The third most popular motive for stopping learning Polish was *I think it's not worth the effort*, chosen by 10 respondents (19%), and two people (4%) declared that learning Polish was not worth the money. One person added in a comment that it was not worth learning Polish if it was not needed for work.

In this question, 10 people selected *Other*, and they indicated various problems related to learning Polish (or sometimes to learning a foreign language in general). Two respondents stated honestly that they were too lazy to learn, and another person wrote that reaching an adequate level in business Polish would take too long. Other participants stated that they had other priorities or obligations at present, and that teachers taught them irrelevant things.

Finally, there was the last subgroup of 25 people who had never previously learnt Polish, despite living and working in Poland. For the question *Why aren't you learning Polish?* the answers were:

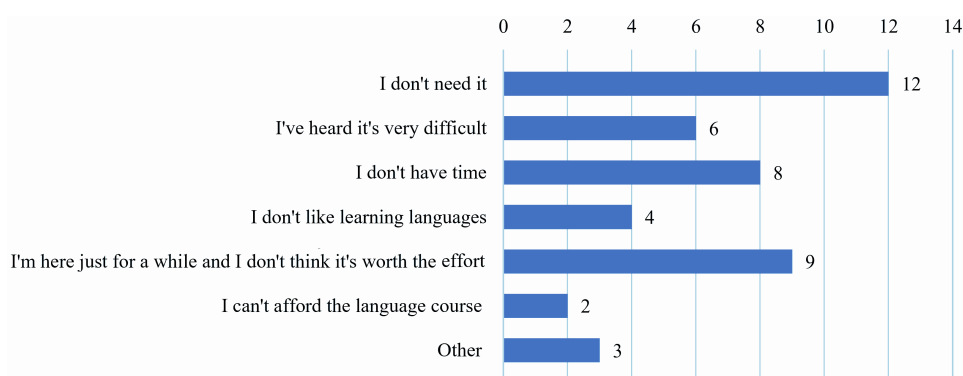


Figure 6. Reasons for not learning the Polish language (own study).

In the presented responses, the most popular was the answer *I don't need it*, given by 12 respondents, 48% of the subgroup group. 36% of the subgroup (9 people) declared that they had not learnt Polish because they would only be in Poland short-term, so they did not think it was worth learning. The next most common reason for not learning it was lack of time, chosen by 8 participants, 32% of the subgroup. 6 people (24%) indicated that they had not learnt Polish because they had heard it was very difficult.

4 respondents (16%) admitted honestly that they did not like learning foreign languages, and 2 (8%) stated that they could not afford a language course. 3 people chose to answer *Other*, accompanied with comments: *It is not an important language; I understand very well and can speak basic Polish* (answer given by a Czech woman), *I have learnt on the course of my business*.

In the comments left by this subgroup there were many explanations as to why they did not want to learn the language. Some participants, especially those who knew another Slavic language, stated that they understood a lot of Polish, even without learning it. One of the respondents wrote that he would start learning it if he decided to stay [in Poland] longer than 2–3 years. Another stated that the Polish language is useless outside Poland, and there were also some disrespectful comments, such as: *It sounds strange, like corrupted Russian, I don't like it.*

6 Discussion

As presented in section 4, the average participant of the study declared knowledge of almost 3 foreign languages, excluding Polish. This proves that the majority of expatriates living in Poland are multilingual. This data has two important implications for teaching and researching Polish as a foreign language. Firstly, it means that most of the expatriates learning Polish (and probably many other learners of Polish as a foreign language) will learn Polish not as a second, but as a third or subsequent language. Because of this, current or future teachers of Polish as a foreign language should at least be familiar with the basic aspects of third language acquisition and use methods which support multilingual development (see Chłopek, 2011; Jessner, 2006). On the other hand, the data presented above might offer interesting input into research on multilingualism with the Polish language, especially in studies dedicated to Polish as a third or subsequent language.

In his article from 2019, Levchuk presented data obtained during a study conducted with a group of Ukrainians, mostly students, who declared their motivation to learn Polish. The main incentives to start learning were higher education (76.1%), work (40.4%) or the intention to settle in Poland (29.4%) (Levchuk, 2019). In the present study reported in this article, the characteristics of the target group were very different: the respondents were adults who were already in work and who came mostly from Western countries. Unlike the Ukrainian minority in Poland (Levchuk, 2019), not many of them were planning to settle in Poland permanently and they did not need to obtain the official language certificate which is necessary in order to receive Polish citizenship. It is important to keep in mind the fact that most expatriates are usually not forced to learn Polish by their employers, as their work language is English.

The study participants listed almost 4 reasons per person for learning Polish, which confirms that the motivation to learn a foreign language is a very complex and multifaceted topic. Learning a language is rarely undertaken for one reason only, more often than not it is determined by a whole set of factors.

Firstly, the motivation of expatriates living in Poland is integrative, as the most popular answer was *I live in Poland and I think learning the language helps in getting to know the country better.* The same conclusion can be drawn from the comments – usually the participants treat learning Polish as a way of immersing themselves into the culture and showing respect to their host country.

I want to use Polish in everyday situations was the second most popular answer, which highlights very practical goals in learning Polish and means that most foreigners living in Poland do not want to speak English in a grocery store or in a café. Many of the foreigners living in Poland, especially Americans, are fascinated by Polish bazaars or little traditional shops, where only Polish is spoken. Such interactions provide an excellent opportunity to exit the “English-speaking bubble”. Curiously, this motivation seems to be simultaneously instrumental and integrative, as here the target language is an instrument to make everyday life easier, and, on the other hand, speaking a language in “real life” can be an opportunity to fully integrate into society.

The integrative learning orientation was also demonstrated in the next most popular answers, which were the need to use Polish with friends (51% of respondents) and colleagues (44%). This shows that learning the language of the country is an important part of full social integration, though considering how much time we usually spend at work, the second number may seem low. It is highly possible that the Polish-speaking friends and especially colleagues of expatriates have a very good command of English, as in many international companies English is the language of

communication. Moreover, Polish people are not used to non-Slavic foreigners speaking in Polish. In the comments, participants said that Poles usually prefer speaking English with them, which might be demotivating:

- *Learning Polish is quite difficult, unless you're making a serious commitment (...) considering most people my age in Warsaw would rather willingly speak English (...).*
- *In general Polish people aren't open to foreigners speaking Polish. They immediately correct or stop you if you make a slight mistake. Unhelpful and demotivating.*
- *(...) Polish people usually don't level down themselves while talking to a beginner.*

The fact that Poles prefer to speak English rather than Polish with their colleagues is not surprising, especially considering the fact that more and more Polish people work in international companies where all communication is conducted in English. Furthermore, since the 1990s, English has replaced Russian in school curricula and nowadays is the most chosen foreign language in the secondary school-leaving examinations (Pawłowski, 2019, p. 165). Currently, English may be considered to be the most commonly-spoken foreign language in Poland.

Table 4. Foreign language teaching/school-leaving examinations in Poland 1986–2017 (Pawłowski, 2019, p. 165).

Language	1986/1987	1997/1998	2005/2006	2017/2018
Russian	83%	24%	5.3%	1.7%
English	6%	40%	76%	91,7%
German	8%	30%	17%	5,8%
French	2%	5%	1,5%	0,8%
Other	1%	1%	0,2%	0,8%

Among the less-chosen answers in the question about motivation were those related to the family or partner's family. This is understandable: firstly, not all the respondents had Polish partners, and those who did were probably already using a different language to communicate with them. However, talking with a Polish partner's family is an important reason for those in long-term relationships with Polish people, and could be considered to be an integrative motivation, even though this represents a micro-scale integration: i.e. within one's own family.

Even though all the respondents were working in Poland, they were not eager to use Polish with clients. This result is not surprising, considering that most contact with clients requires very precise communication and a foreigner who does not speak Polish at an advanced level is unlikely to use Polish in this communication context. This is because the "price" of a language mistake could be much higher than in other situations (for example, misunderstanding business negotiations or simply saying something inappropriate).

The respondents who had learnt Polish before but had given up were asked about their reasons for doing so. More than half of the respondents cited lack of time as the reason for stopping and this reason was also chosen by respondents who had never learnt the language. Lack of time is a typical problem for adult learners who must combine language learning with professional or family obligations (Komorowska, 2005). Often, language courses are conducted in the evening, when the participants are tired after work and still must make an intellectual effort to learn the language. Afternoon or evening lessons take the place of time spent with family or friends, which also has a negative impact on the motivation to learn and leads to faster disengagement if the course does not meet the expectations of the learner.

Another problem is giving up after several attempts, which was the reason given by 30% of the participants. Usually, these are learners who have tried learning with different schools and

teachers, and often with different methods, but are demotivated by their lack of progress. Some of the comments show that language classes often failed to meet learners' needs, were too boring, or the organization of the learning process was not good. Another problem was the lack of satisfying results:

- The classes can become quite dull as there is a lot of focus on grammar which I think is necessary when learning Polish. As is a good grasp of metalanguage. I'd prefer to learn through a communicative approach but that will only take me so far.
- Classes should be more interactive. Everyone is enthusiastic at the beginning, but when reality hits hard, and kept hitting harder – there are dropouts. Less motivation. (...)
- It is hard to learn. At first it was as easy as any other language, but later it became very difficult. Everyone <35 knows English (more or less) so it's easy to stay trapped in an English bubble and make little progress.
- When I took classes all other students had Polish roots or were Ukrainian or other Slavic language speakers. I felt that I couldn't keep up with the pace and that Polish language was much easier for them. For example, the teacher would use new vocabulary and other students could infer the meaning of the word when I had no clue.

These comments also highlight two different issues. The first is that the approach and methods used during the classes were not interesting enough and did not engage the learner as may have been expected. The second is the problem of mixing Slavic and non-Slavic learners in one group, which could be solved by dividing them into separate classes, which often happens in language schools and is good practice. On the other hand, such schools are businesses like any other, and sometimes dividing learners into smaller groups is economically unviable. Negative learning experiences in the past might be the reason why 19% of the respondents stated that learning Polish is not worth the effort and why 4% think that it is not worth spending money on it.

Some of the issues mentioned above, such as lack of time, giving up easily when the course is not responding to the learner's needs, or reluctance to invest time or money, are typical for adult learners in general (Knowles et al., 2015; Komorowska, 2005) and are not exclusive to expatriates.

In the last subgroup, which consisted of those participants who had never previously learnt Polish, almost half stated that they did not need the language. All of these respondents were living and working in Poland at the time of completing the survey, but they did not think that living in a foreign country was a reason to learn its language. Most probably, these respondents were working in English-speaking companies, had mostly foreign friends, and did not have any need to leave "the English bubble".

The above data poses the question: is it possible to have a good and comfortable life in Poland without knowledge of its language? As already mentioned, many Poles speak English, and in the Polish public space it is easy to find or receive information in English, as well as in other foreign languages. This was shown in Pawłowski's study (Pawłowski, 2019; see also Levchuk, 2021):

Table 5. Foreign languages in public communication in Poland (Pawłowski, 2019, p. 177).

	English	Russian	Ukrainian	Chinese	German
Universities	96%	29%	18%	13%	4%
Banks	61%	6%	28%	–	–
Public transport in cities	100%	31%	12%	–	92%
Voivodeship offices	75%	63%	31%	–	31%
Insurance companies	26%	7%	7%	7%	7%

A significant group of participants (36%) decided not to learn Polish because of the length of their stay in the country. Of these 9 people, 2 were staying in Poland for 3 to 6 months, 4 were

staying for 6 months to a year, 2 for one to two years, and one respondent was staying for more than two years but fewer than three. This shows that even two years spent in Poland may be considered a stay not long enough to start learning the language.

The above results also prove that the respondents considered Polish to be a useless language outside of Poland, even though it is the largest Slavic language used in the European Union. This brings to mind Levchuk's study in which he was researching the emotional attitudes towards Polish among Ukrainian students, in which only 5.2% of his respondents stated that it was an important European language and 4.4% of respondents declared it to be a language of social advancement (Levchuk, 2019).

Finally, some of the respondents believed Polish to be a very difficult language, even though they had never learnt it. It is true that Polish has a reputation of being challenging, which may discourage potential learners from embarking on learning it.

7 Conclusions

The present study has investigated the attitudes of expatriates living in Poland towards learning Polish. At the same time, it has delivered a great deal of significant data on the target group.

Participants were selected from a group of professionals living and working in Poland, regardless of their knowledge of Polish. The study was conducted in English, which meant that a good command of this language was required to participate in it.

Unlike the majority of foreigners registered in Poland, most of the participants of the survey were not of Slavic origin, nor they were able to speak any other Slavic language. The respondents mostly came from the USA or Europe, especially the UK, Spain and Portugal. Therefore, the most common native language was English, followed by Spanish and Portuguese, although there was a significant difference between the figures: English as a first language was declared 67 times, whereas Spanish was chosen 22 times, and Portuguese – 15.

An interesting finding was the multilingualism of the survey respondents, with 93% of participants declaring knowledge of at least one another language, and the average participant knowing 2–3 foreign languages (precisely 2.93 languages per person), excluding Polish. This information is very significant for the future teaching of Polish as a foreign language, as in many cases Polish is not acquired as the second but rather as the third, fourth or subsequent language of the learner. This is why it is necessary to train teachers in the basics of third language acquisition and methods supporting multilingual development. This data might also be important for researchers interested in multilingualism with the Polish language.

In the part of the survey related to Polish, the crucial question was about learning Polish, which further divided participants into four subgroups: those currently learning Polish, those who had learnt but were not learning it anymore, those planning to learn and those who had never learned it. Most of the survey participants displayed a positive attitude towards Polish, as 87% had some experience with learning the language and only 13% had never tried to learn it.

Among the three first groups, the most common way of learning was by immersion into the language (listening to other people, radio or television), followed by group or individual classes and self-study with online resources.

Two subgroups, respondents currently learning Polish and those planning to learn, were asked about their motivation. There were 458 answers from 117 people, meaning at least 3 different reasons for learning Polish per person. This shows how complex and multifaceted the issue of motivation is, which is probably true for teaching adults in general rather than only expatriates. This also proves that each teacher should prepare a needs analysis before planning their language courses, as each learner might have different priorities and goals in the learning process. Learners' needs should be taken into consideration in the process of planning the course and, especially in group classes, some parts of the curriculum should be negotiated with the students. It is important to divide students based on their language origin (Slavic/non-Slavic), especially at lower levels, and in some cases also based on their learning goals (i.e. everyday/professional communication).

Many of the participants' motives could be treated as integrative motivation, as the most common option chosen in that part was *I live in Poland and I think learning the language helps in getting to know the country better*, and the second most popular answer was *I want to use Polish in everyday situations*. This motive could be also called instrumental because the language is an instrument to make everyday situations easier.

On the other hand, there were two other subgroups that had decided not to learn Polish. One of them was a group of people that had tried learning it but had stopped. Unfortunately, not many of them had stopped because they had reached a satisfactory level. Most of the respondents declared that their reason for giving up was lack of time, but the second most popular answer was *I've tried several times but gave up*. This should be an important sign for teachers of Polish as a foreign language, because it shows that Polish classes frequently do not respond to the needs of learners; classes may be boring and the organization of the course may be frustrating (e.g. by mixing non-Slavic students with Slavic students). Therefore, I believe that someone who enjoys their Polish classes, who finds them interesting and linked to their needs, would be less likely to quit, regardless of how busy they are.

The last group presented in the article were people living and working in Poland who had not even decided to start learning Polish. They did not feel the integrative needs that motivate many learners of Polish, and the fact that they lived in the country did not encourage them to start learning. Most of this subgroup declared that they did not need Polish, and many of them thought that it was not worth the effort to learn it. This shows that knowledge of Polish is not particularly valuable for this group of respondents; they do not consider it useful and they often think it is difficult, even though they have never attempted to learn it. On the other hand, it may also be the result of unfavourable opinions of Polish. It seems that improving the image of the Polish language among those foreigners living in Poland should be an important mission not only for Polish teachers, but also for the country's public institutions.


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